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FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: REVIEW OF MAINSTREAMING IN ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

Implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/166 on the role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in eliminating violence against women

Note by the Secretary-General

In its resolution 50/166 on the role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in eliminating violence against women, the General Assembly requested the Fund to include in its regular reports information regarding its activities to eliminate violence against women and girls and to provide such information to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights. It also requested the Fund to include in its regular reports information, inter alia, on the establishment of a trust fund in support of national, regional and international actions to eliminate violence against women and to provide such information to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights. The report of the Fund, as requested by the Assembly in the above-mentioned resolution, is being transmitted, in the annex to the present note, to the Commission on the Status of Women by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme.

* E/CN.6/1996/1.

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Annex

THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR WOMEN IN ELIMINATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Note by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme

The Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme has the honour to transmit to the Commission on the Status of Women the report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/166.

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INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 50/166, the General Assembly welcomed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1/ agreed upon at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women which called for the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls. In the same resolution, the Assembly recalled its resolutions 48/104, proclaiming the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, and 48/107 in which it had reaffirmed the catalytic role that the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) had played in facilitating the efforts of Governments and non-governmental organizations to support innovative activities that directly benefited and empowered women. In its resolution 50/166, the Assembly also urged Governments to allocate adequate resources for activities related to the elimination of violence against women, including resources for the implementation of plans of action at all appropriate levels, as called for in paragraph 124 (p) of the Platform for Action.

2. The General Assembly, in paragraph 1 of its resolution 50/166, reiterated the Assembly's appreciation for the advocacy initiatives of UNIFEM, including its contribution to and participation in the follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 July 1993, 2/ in particular with respect to efforts to combat violence against women.

3. The General Assembly, in its resolution 50/166, requested the Fund, as one of the operational bodies of the United Nations, to take into account the need to strengthen its activities to eliminate violence against women as part of system-wide efforts of the United Nations towards that goal, in accordance with the measures set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and focusing on activities, particularly at the national and community levels.

4. The General Assembly, in the same resolution, also requested the Fund, in undertaking any relevant activities, to cooperate closely with the competent United Nations organs and bodies, in particular the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, the Centre for Human Rights, the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and to include in its regular reports information regarding its activities to eliminate violence against women and also to provide such information to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights.

5. Also in its resolution 50/166, the General Assembly requested the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in consultation with the Secretary-General and with the competent United Nations organs and bodies, to consider the possibility of establishing a trust fund, within the existing mandate, structure and management of UNIFEM, in support of national, regional and international actions, including those taken by Governments and non-governmental organizations, to eliminate violence against women.

6. The present initial report provides a brief background on the activities of UNIFEM towards the elimination of violence against women and communicates to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights the intention of the Administrator of UNDP to initiate the necessary consultations as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/166.

I. THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR WOMEN IN THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

7. In 1991, UNIFEM prepared a policy paper entitled "Violence against women: an obstacle to development" on the issue of violence against women and its negative impact in bringing women into the development process. Based on information received from staff in the field, the paper discussed the minimal impact that development projects would have if the issue of violence against women was ignored, and went on to offer detailed recommendations for improving the situation. That paper was presented at the thirtieth session of the Consultative Committee of UNIFEM, which recommended that UNIFEM should respond to specific interventions that could provide models with a potential for mainstreaming, and advocate and build awareness at various levels within UNIFEM's own activities and the United Nations system on violence against women as an obstacle to development, and agreed that UNIFEM could, alternatively, pursue sub-trust fund financing for such a purpose. This policy paper was later published as Battered Dreams: Violence against Women, An Obstacle to Development. 3/

8. The publication of Battered Dreams coincided with an increasing awareness on the part of the international community as well as other United Nations organs and bodies of the extent and pervasiveness of the phenomenon in question and the need for innovative responses to the devastating impact of gender-based violence against women.

9. As a catalyst for the addressing of issues of concern to women within the United Nations system, UNIFEM has supported innovative initiatives that demonstrate effective development alternatives and facilitate a more gender-sensitive enabling policy environment. UNIFEM, in response to the needs articulated by women, has increasingly utilized a programme framework that views the pursuit of sustainable human development as a fundamental human rights issue, and consistently relates women's human rights, particularly gender-based violence, to the development process. UNIFEM has successfully used this approach to establish a dialogue among non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and government representatives concerned with violence against women and women's human rights issues, thereby deepening the intersection of macro-policy initiatives and micro-programme interventions.

10. UNIFEM played a critical role in facilitating the inclusion of women's demands that violence against women be placed in the international agenda in the process leading up to the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993. To this end, prior to the Conference, UNIFEM co-hosted, with the Government of the Netherlands and the North-South Institute, a seminar entitled "Calling for change: international strategies to end violence against women". The Fund also brought over 60 women's rights advocates to the Conference. At

the Conference itself, UNIFEM sponsored the participation of 15 persons who testified at the global tribunal on violations of women's human rights.

11. UNIFEM's activities in the area of human rights, particularly violence against women, drew much support from grass-roots constituencies, partner agencies, the Fund's Consultative Committee, and the international human rights community in general, and resulted in UNIFEM's establishment of a Women's Human Rights Programme. UNIFEM's role in the realization of women's human rights was explicitly recognized in section II.B.3, paragraph 37, of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action which calls for the integration of the equal status of women and the human rights of women into the mainstream of United Nations system-wide activity; and again in chapter IV, section I, paragraph 231 (g), of the Platform for Action, which specifies the need for cooperation and coordination among different United Nations bodies and agencies in the promotion and protection of the human rights of women.

12. In its work on human rights, UNIFEM has identified violence against women as a key component of its activities. The Women's Human Rights Programme has been supportive of the work of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, its causes and consequences; it has supported the global campaign for women's human rights - a non-governmental initiative which, through its tribunals at global forums, has documented cases of violence against women as constituting violations of women's human rights - through facilitation of the campaign's lobbying efforts and events. In Beijing, UNIFEM assisted in the launching of a Worldwide Campaign to End Violence against Women, in focusing attention on the urgent need to implement the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and in supporting the work of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women.

II. INITIAL STEPS TAKEN BY THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME TO COMPLY WITH GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 50/166

13. Following the request of the General Assembly as put forth in its resolution 50/166, the Administrator will commence a process of consultation, and will keep the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights apprised of its progress.

14. In addition, UNIFEM has requested that its staff in the field gather information, from governmental and non-governmental organizations working in the area of violence against women, on the types of interventions that would result in significant progress towards the elimination of violence against women.

Notes

1/ Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (A/CONF.177/20), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

2/ Report of the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 14-25 June 1993 (A/CONF.157/24 (Part I)), chap. III.

3/ New York, UNIFEM, 1992. Available in English, French and Spanish.